

VNA/HOSPICE ALLIANCE

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Kimberly Topper
Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (HFD-21)
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Md. 20857

6/25/01

re: Anesthetic and life support drugs advisory committee meeting

Dear Ms. Topper:

Please accept this letter as written testimony on the medical use of opiate analgesics for the treatment of pain, particularly non-malignant pain. As a nurse who has specialized in the care of the dying for over 15 years, I have seen the miraculous outcome of the appropriate use of opioids like morphine and oxycodone in the relief of symptoms and ultimately, in the improvement of quality of life. Every day, Hospice nurses admit new patients to hospice programs around the country with cardiac, respiratory, cancer or other diseases. These patients are in pain which interferes with or prohibits their functioning and living. Pain to the extent that most ask about suicide and euthanasia in some way, looking for relief from their suffering. As you may know, hospice does not support those alternatives. Instead, we believe that, when a persons' pain is dealt with appropriately, they no longer wish to prematurely end their lives. In fact, we see this nearly every day! What a sad comment on the state of pain control prior to entering into a hospice program. Unfortunately, many physicians are reluctant to prescribe opioids for pain relief. I ask that you are cautious of this in your deliberations. We are already in a crisis with inadequate relief of pain in this society, additional regulations will become greater barriers for patients to receive adequate pain control. As the JCAHO has recently stated in their new accreditation standards, pain control is a right! Drug diversion and drug abuse is a major public health problem in our society and must be dealt with. But, this should be done in such a way that those in our society who are suffering from pain, can receive the medication that they need to make them pain free.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter.

Sincerely:



Carla Braveman, RN, M.Ed., CHCE
VNA/Hospice Alliance Director